

Applicant : Scott Montgomery
Appl. No. : 09/990,605
Examiner : Kambiz Abdi
Docket No. : 703602.6

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Claims 1-156 (canceled)

157. (currently amended) A postage indicia generation system for implementation with a postal system, comprising:

a centralized postage-issuing computer system accessible to a plurality of end user computers, configured to generate and transmit a unique postage indicium to an end user computer upon request by the end user computer to be applied to a mail piece;

a master tracking computer system, communicatively coupled to the centralized postage-issuing computer system, configured to generate a unique tracking identification string to be applied to the a mail piece and to send the unique tracking identification string to the centralized postage-issuing computer system,

wherein the centralized postage-issuing computer system is further configured to associate the tracking identification string with the unique postage indicium and store the association in a database,

further wherein the centralized postage-issuing computer system enables a user postal authority to verify the unique postage indicium on the mail piece by sending the tracking identification string to the centralized postage-issuing computer system, wherein upon receiving the tracking identification string from the postal authority, the centralized postage-issuing retrieves the unique postage indicium from the database and sends the unique postage indicium to the postal authority.

158. (currently amended) The postage indicia generation system of claim 157, wherein the unique tracking identification string on the mail piece is represented as a one-dimensional barcode, and wherein the centralized postage-issuing computer

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system enables ~~a user~~ the postal authority to ~~verify request~~ the unique postage indicium ~~on the mail piece~~ by submitting data derived from the one-dimensional barcode.

159. (new) The postage indicia generation system of claim 1, wherein the unique postage indicium comprises a digital signature, and the digital signature is not applied to the mail piece.

160. (new) A postage indicia generation system for implementation with a postal system, comprising:

a centralized postage-issuing computer system accessible to a plurality of end user computers, configured to generate a unique postage indicium upon request by the end user computer;

a master tracking computer system, communicatively coupled to the centralized postage-issuing computer system, configured to generate a unique tracking identification string to be applied to a mail piece and to send the unique tracking identification string to the centralized postage-issuing computer system,

wherein the centralized postage-issuing computer system is further configured to associate the tracking identification string with the unique postage indicium and store the association in a database,

further wherein the centralized postage-issuing computer system enables a postal authority to verify postage on the mail piece by sending the tracking identification string to the centralized postage-issuing computer system, wherein upon receiving the tracking identification string from the postal authority, the centralized postage-issuing computer retrieves and validates the unique postage indicium using a public key, and sends an indication of whether the unique postage indicium is valid to the postal authority.

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161. (new) The postage indicia generation system of claim 159, wherein if the unique postage indicium is validated, the centralized postage-issuing computer sends the unique postage indicium to the postal authority for further validation.